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# A Network in Transition: Actors, Interests, and Alliances in the Afghanistan Conflict as of Early 2014

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# A Network in Transition: Actors, Interests, and Alliances in the Afghanistan Conflict as of Early 2014

Arvid Bell *with Botakoz Iliyas, Frankfurt am Main, May 2014*

Abstract

This paper maps out the negotiation environment of the Afghanistan conflict. So far, all attempts to end the violence between the Afghan government, insurgency, and US and NATO through negotiations have failed. Key obstacles to negotiations are the complexity of the conflict and the variety of state and non-state actors that are directly or indirectly involved. This paper explores the interests and relationships of these actors and highlights the most important alliances and connections. Finally, these connections are visualized in a network diagram.

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## 1. Introduction: Purpose, Framework, and Caveats

With the withdrawal of the remaining ISAF troops scheduled for the end of 2014, a peaceful and secure future for Afghanistan is anything but certain. An armed insurgency steps up its attacks against the national security forces, neighboring countries cooperate with their proxies on Afghan soil, and a weak civil society finds itself trapped between the Taliban, despised warlords, a fragmented political opposition, and an administration plagued with corruption.

At the same time, attempts to negotiate a political solution between the main parties to the conflict have stalled. The strategic complexity of the Afghanistan conflict which involves a variety of state and non-state actors makes a negotiation process – not even to mention a negotiated settlement itself – very difficult. This paper seeks to outline these actors, their interests in the Afghanistan conflict, and their multiple connections and alliances. It serves as a comprehensive overview of the negotiation environment in the Afghanistan conflict.[1]

The paper assesses the parties through the lens of the Afghanistan conflict. It does not intend to give a full assessment of all actors' interests or, in the case of the involved states, of entire security strategies. Only interests relevant for or connected to the Afghanistan conflict are touched upon. Given the variety of actors and issues at stake and because of the necessity to limit the scope of this analysis, the assessment remains largely on a rationalist level and does not systematically explore issues such as identities and perceptions and the constructions of those in every actor's case. However, these categories play a crucial role in the Afghanistan conflict and are explored when they offer important explanations for a relevant party's behavior. Furthermore, internal divisions within a party are taken into account if these impact the party's Afghanistan policy.

The paper primarily relies on secondary sources, such as the work of Afghanistan experts and Central Asia scholars. Occasionally, primary sources from the relevant parties to the conflict are taken into account and cited in order to illustrate a party's position.

In chapters 2 through 6, the Afghan actors, i.e. the different political factions, the most prominent warlords, the insurgency, and the civil society are assessed. Chapters 7 to 9 analyze the roles of the USA, NATO, and the UN. Chapter 10 addresses the militant Islamists in Pakistan, chapter 11 deals with the regional powers, chapter 12 with the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, and chapter 13 with the Central Asian states. Chapter 14 identifies sub-conflicts of the Afghanistan conflict and maps out the previously outlined ties between the parties in a network diagram.

The paper focuses on those parties that would potentially play a role in a comprehensive multi-level peace agreement for Afghanistan. Actors that are unlikely to be involved in a negotiated settlement (such as NGOs, state development agencies, Japan, the EU, and individual ISAF contributors) are not analyzed, even if they are undoubtedly active in Afghanistan.

For purposes of systematic comparison, the paper uses a uniform system of categorization which lists the following characteristics of each party:

***Figures:*** important persons that hold significant formal or informal authority over the party's Afghanistan policy.

***Relevant divisions, factions, subgroups, subordinated institutions:*** in case of states, relevant institutions that have different interests or involvements related to the Afghanistan conflict; in case of non-state actors, relevant formal or informal internal divisions or factions; in case of organizations, relevant subordinated institutions.

***Memberships:*** key organizations or alliances of which a state is a member; only listed if relevant in the context of this assessment.

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1 The author thanks Botakoz Iliyas for her support with this paper during her internship at PRIF. For very helpful comments and feedback, the author thanks Lauren Glaser, Felix Pahl, Cornelius Friesendorf, and Niklas Schörnig.

***Strong ties with:*** the party's most important allies and partners. The relationship usually includes significant material or financial support related to a party's armed struggle against an armed opponent; the party may either be the donor or the recipient of this support.

***Notable ties with:*** other important partners of the party. The relationship is characterized by material, financial, or ideological support, which may or may not be linked to an armed struggle. Actors with whom the party maintains channels of cooperation and assistance may also be listed under this category.

***Armed opponents:*** actors with whom the party is currently in a state of armed combat.

***Rivals:*** actors with whom the party is in a state of political, ideological, or economic rivalry but with whom there is currently no direct armed combat. Rivalry does not exclude the possibility of cooperation, and captures a wide range of competitive behavior including conflict over contested territory as long as there is no armed combat.

***Relevance of conflict:*** the importance that a party attaches to the situation in Afghanistan in comparison with other issues on the party's agenda. This is not to be confused with the relevance of this party *for* the conflict or with the perception of this party's relevance by other parties.

***Key interests:*** most important desires, demands, and objectives of the party which are directly or indirectly related to the Afghanistan conflict.

With ***party,*** the paper refers to a state or a non-state actor or a distinguishable group of actors or figures involved in the Afghanistan conflict. With ***figure,*** the paper means an individual person. An ***actor*** may either be a party or a figure.

The release of this paper coincides with the 2014 Afghan presidential election. The election result will reshuffle the alliances in Afghanistan and cause disruptions in the network of relationships as outlined in the following chapters. Since these disruptions cannot yet be fully predicted, this paper restrains from speculating about potential break-ups or creations of coalitions. Instead, it offers a snapshot of the "Afghanistan network" as of early 2014 and maps out the different layers of conflict for interested observers and negotiation practitioners.

An updated version of this working paper that takes into account the impact of the presidential election on the negotiation environment is planned for release as a PRIF report in the end of the year.[2]

## 2. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA)

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Hamid Karzai, Zalmai Rassoul, Bismillah Khan, Karim Khalili, Mohammad Fahim (1957-2014) |
| Subordinated | ANSF, HPC |
| Strong ties with | USA, NATO (ISAF) |
| Memberships | Istanbul Process, OIC, SCO (observer), CSTO (observer) |
| Notable ties with | Abdulrashid Dostum, Atta Mohammad Nur, Ismail Khan, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, Gul Agha Sherzai, Salahuddin Rabbani (HPC), UAE, Saudi Arabia, China, India, Turkey, Iran |
| Armed opponents | IEA, HQN, HIG |
| Rivals | Pakistan, Afghan Political Opposition (domestic) |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | "Karzai remaining until 2014 […] with security for him, his family, and inner circle […]; the orderly, phased withdrawal of [...] ISAF and US forces with continued training and weapons through 2014 and beyond; […] power-sharing with non-Pashtun elements to forestall a civil war on sectarian lines; a democratic Afghanistan with the current constitution largely preserved and some new minority and civil protections; continued international financial support" (Pickering 2011: 30) |

2 Readers of this paper are encouraged to submit their critical feedback. The author can be contacted at bell@hsfk.de.

After 9/11, a US-led coalition intervened in Afghanistan in order to destroy the al-Qaeda camps and oust the Taliban, who had refused to hand over Osama bin Laden to the US, from power. Supported by the US, various anti-Taliban warlords (⇨ 4), allied as the "United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan" (labeled "Northern Alliance"), quickly moved to help defeat the Taliban. Following this temporary military success, the international community organized a series of conferences to facilitate the rebuilding of post-Taliban Afghanistan. The current Afghan government derives its legitimacy from the constitution that was adapted by a Grand Assembly (*Loya Jirga*) in 2013/2014. The first presidential and parliamentary elections in Afghanistan took place in 2004 and 2005 respectively, with subsequent elections taking place every five years thereafter.

The first President of the new Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, was elected in 2004 and reelected in 2009. He is not allowed to run for the Presidency again in the 2014 election. In order to stay in power, Karzai has forged alliances with some of Afghanistan's most prominent warlords (⇨ 4). While Karzai is an ethnic Pashtun, influential Tajiks such as Vice President Mohammad Fahim (1957-2014) and Defense Minister Bismillah Khan hold significant control over the security apparatus of the Afghan state: "This issue is where the country's ethnic fissures appear most strikingly as a proxy for the country's deep political divisions. Despite the efforts of the American military to rebuild an Afghan army on the basis of professionalism, the senior officers remain largely Northern Alliance figures, and disproportionately Tajik." (Brahimi/Pickering 2011: 35)

The legitimacy of the Afghan government is severely undermined by endemic corruption. According to opinion polls, 79% of all Afghans say that corruption is a major problem in today's Afghanistan (Asia Foundation 2012: 107). The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) depend on external support, and the GIRoA is currently negotiating a Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) with the US (⇨ 7) that would allow a number of US forces to stay on after 2014. In the beginning of his presidency, Karzai was considered a friend of the US. More recently, however, he has tried to reverse this perception among Afghans by criticizing the US for their notorious night raids, airstrikes, and lack of respect for Afghan sovereignty. Karzai has also established a High Peace Council (HPC) in order to reach out to those insurgents who are willing to lay down their weapons. While strictly opposing all attempts to deprive GIRoA of its leadership over peace negotiations, he has encouraged the Taliban (⇨ 5.1) to join the political process, though these efforts have failed to gain traction.

## 3. The Afghan Political Opposition

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Abdullah Abdullah, Ahmad Zia Massoud, Amrullah Saleh, Hanif Atmar, Sima Simar, Yunus Qanuni, Mohammad Mohaqiq, Ashraf Ghani; also: Atta Mohammad Nur, Abdulrashid Dostum, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf |
| Parties and groups | National Coalition, National Front, Islamic Society, National Movement, Unity Party, National Islamic Movement, Truth and Justice Party, Islamic Call |
| Notable ties with | Iran (Unity Party), Uzbekistan/Turkey (National Islamic Movement), Saudi Arabia (Islamic Call) |
| Armed opponents | IEA, HQN, HIG |
| Rivals | GIRoA, internal rivalry |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | *fragmented; see below* |

The political opposition to the Karzai government consists of a variety of different actors and parties with a common history of alliances, divisions, and new alliances.

Several prominent Afghan politicians are associated with the Islamic Society (*Jam'iat-e Islami*) that emerged in the 1960s/1970s as a movement of the religious right. During the war against the Soviets, it evolved into a "military-political network" (Ruttig 2011a). Today, the Islamic Society can count on a substantial number of followers "in the ministries, security forces, parliament and at the subnational level; it has a number of provincial governors [...] as well as police chiefs" (Ruttig 2011a). At the same time, the Islamic Society is internally fragmented: Islamic Society members Bismillah

Khan, the current Minister of Defense, and Mohammad Fahim (1957-2014), Karzai's First Vice President, have joined the government (⇨ 2), while Ahmad Zia Massoud, Abdullah Abdullah, and Abdullah Saleh are leaders in the political opposition (⇨ 3). Ismail Khan and Atta Mohammad Nur are somewhere in between (with Khan, a conservative Tajik and former governor of Herat, formally integrated into GIRoA as its Minister of Water and Energy, and Nur serving as the Governor of Balkh).

Abdullah Abdullah, leader of the **National Coalition of Afghanistan** (*Etelaf-e Melli*) and presidential hopeful in the 2014 election, criticizes how the Karzai government has been handling negotiations with the Taliban (⇨ 5.1) and has stated that "the people have to be assured that the achievements of the past few years, including democratic process and the right of the people for voting and for education and these principles and values shouldn't be sacrificed." Abdullah, who is of mixed Pashtun and Tajik origin, is supported by Yunus Qanuni (Tajik) and Atta Muhammad Nur (Tajik).

The **National Front of Afghanistan** (*Jabh-e Melli*) was founded by Ahmad Zia Massoud, Mohammad Mohaqiq, and Abdulrashid Dostum who represent three different ethnic groups (Tajiks, Hazara, and Uzbeks). They call for "a national dialogue on a revised Constitution to correct the inherent flaws in the present power structure by decentralizing the political system, making it more compatible with the diverse political, social and cultural nature of Afghanistan," and claim that "the Afghan people deserve and need a parliamentary form of democracy instead of a personality-centered Presidential system" (declaration as quoted Ruttig 2012). The desire to shift to a parliamentary system and "the decentralization of power and electoral reforms" is shared by the National Coalition (Ruttig 2011a).

The **National Islamic Movement** (*Jombesh-e Melli Islami*) is a political-military party led by the Uzbek Warlord Abdulrashid Dostum. While some observers point out that Dostum has a somewhat more secular and left-leaning orientation than the Islamist parties and warlords, others accuse his militias of gross human rights violations. The Hazara **Unity Party** (*Hezb-e Wahdat*) has become fragmented: While Karim Khalili serves as the Second Vice President in Karzai's government, Mohammad Mohaqiq has co-founded the National Front. The former director of the NDS Amrullah Saleh has founded the **National Movement** (*Basej-e Melli*), which has mobilized a substantial number of anti-Taliban followers. Saleh calls for "a complete disarming of the Taliban, an end to Pakistan's practice of giving sanctuary to Taliban militants and a truth-and-reconciliation process for Afghanistan" (Saleh 2011). The small **Truth and Justice Party** (*Hezb-e Haq wa Edalat*) claims to be a "reformist" opposition party comparable to European Social Democrats (Ruttig 2011b). Prominent members are Hanif Atmar, the former Minister of the Interior, and Sima Samar, the chairwoman of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, who was forced to resign as Minister of Women's Affairs in 2003 because of repeated death threats from Islamists.

For the 2014 presidential election, the alliances have reshuffled as follows: Abdullah Abdullah has picked Mohammad Mohaqiq as his running mate, as well as Mohammad Khan, a member of the Islamic Party (to be precise, of the part of it that officially registered as a legal party, ⇨ 5.3). Ahmad Zia Massoud is on a ticket with Zalmai Rassoul, Karzai's Foreign Minister until late 2013, and Truth & Justice Party member Habiba Sarobi (Hazara), with Rassoul (Pashtun) running for the office of the Presidency. Abdulrashid Dostum runs for Vice President on the ticket of Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai (Pashtun), the Chancellor of Kabul University, an Independent. They are joined by Unity Party member Sarwar Danish (Hazara). The Islamist warlord Abdul Rasul Sayyaf (Pashtun), leader of the Organization for the **Islamic Call** (*Tanzim-e Dahwat-e Islami*), is also running for President and has recruited Ismail Khan as his running mate. Applying a simplified left-right scale from democratic/reformist to ultra-Islamist, the Ghani ticket would be on the left, followed by the Abdullah and the Rassoul tickets in the center, and the Sayyaf ticket on the right.

## 4. The Afghan Warlords

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Abdulrashid Dostum, Ismail Khan, Atta Mohammad Nur, Mohammad Fahim (1957-2014), Karim Khalili, Mohammad Mohaqiq, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, Gul Agha Sherzai |
| Divisions | Ethnic, religious, political, and regional cleavages |
| Strong ties with | GIRoA, USA, NATO |
| Notable ties with | Iran (Hazara warlords and, arguably, Ismail Khan); Turkey (Turkic warlords); Uzbekistan (Abdulrashid Dostum); Saudi Arabia (Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and other Islamists); CIA (pro-Western and pro-GIRoA warlords); Russia (Mohammad Fahim, 1957-2014) |
| Armed opponents | IEA, HQN, HIG |
| Rivals | Internal rivalry; Afghan Civil Society |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Maintain control over their areas of influence; prevent punishment for war crimes and other human rights abuses; secure influx of international resources; establish security and prosperity in their strongholds; manage working relationship with GIRoA without giving up own military and political power; prevent return of the Taliban to Kabul |

A warlord can be defined as a ruler "whose basic characteristics are his independence from any higher authority and his control of a 'private army,' which responds to him personally. [...] Less essential, but still important characteristics are that his power is overwhelmingly based on military strength and/or charisma and that he lacks full 'legitimacy' among the civilian population of the area that he controls" (Giustozzi 2003: 2). Afghan warlordism is "first and foremost explained by the strong demand for security by the population, especially in the villages" (Giustozzi 2003: 4).

The most prominent Afghan warlords share the history of *Jihad* against the Soviets in the 1980s. After having expelled the Red Army and relying on financial and material help from the US, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, the victorious *Mujahideen* then turned against each other and Afghanistan sled into a bloody civil war. The resulting anarchy paved the way for the success of the Taliban (⇨ 5.1), who established their Islamic Emirate and their rigid interpretation of Islamic law in 1996. In 2001, in order to overthrow the Taliban, the US and its allies relied on the warlords, who returned from exile to claim back their traditional areas of influence that the Taliban had stripped them of. Today, the most influential warlords have either formally joined the government (Mohammad Fahim [1957-2014], Karim Khalili), have been appointed governors in their strongholds (Atta Mohammad Nur, Governor of Balkh; Gul Agha Sherzai, governor of Nangahar until 2013, now running for president), or are supporters of the Karzai government (Abdul Rasul Sayyaf) without holding a formal administrative position. Some (Ismail Khan) have also been less successful in managing the delicate balance between local strongmanship and pledging (some kind of) allegiance to the central government.

Various external actors maintain close ties with specific warlords and continue to support them financially, depending on political and religious preferences as well as economic motivations (⇨11, 12, 13). While civil society actors (⇨ 6) accuse warlords of all ethnicities of war crimes and other human rights violations, "some warlord-governors have proven quite successful in areas ranging from security and reconstruction to counternarcotics" (Mukhopadhyay 2009: 1). This helps to explain why, in spite of their dubious record, they can still count on a substantial number of followers in their strongholds. Overall, as Antonio Giustozzi puts it, "these warlords are more akin to politicians than to businessmen, in that what they are looking for is power rather than money as an end in itself" (Giustozzi 2003: 3).

## 5. The Afghan Insurgency

The Afghan insurgency is not a coherent actor but consists of different armed groups with distinct goals and different ties with non-Afghan actors.

The dominant group is the "**Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan**," the Afghan Taliban. With 20,000 to 30,000 fighters (Giustozzi 2010: 4), a number of supporters and followers probably twice that high, and annual revenue of $250 million (Giustozzi 2010: 12), the Islamic Emirate is by far the most important and most influential faction of the insurgency. The two other most notable actors are the **Haqqani network** which is allied with the Taliban, and the **Islamic Party** (*Hezb-e Islami*) led by the Islamist warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Other insurgent factions that are often allied with the IEA include smaller networks such as regional Salafi groups and the Tora Bora Jihad Front.

### *5.1 The Afghan Taliban (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, IEA)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Mullah Omar ("Commander of the Faithful"), Mullah Zakir, Mullah Mansur, Mullah Baradar, Sirajuddin Haqqani |
| Divisions | Supreme Shura; four regional military shuras in Quetta, Peshawar, Miran Shah, and Gerdi Jangal; several committees such as the political committee and the military committee; different networks such as the Kandahari Taliban, the Mansur network, the Tora Bora Jihad Front, and smaller Salafi groups |
| Strong ties with | HQN, IMU |
| Notable ties with | ISI (⇨11.1); Iranian Revolutionary Guards (⇨11.3); donors from the Arab states of the Persian Gulf (⇨ 12); TTP (⇨ 10.1); other militant Islamists such as LeT, *Jundallah*, LeJ (⇨10.3); HIG (occasionally); al-Qaeda |
| Armed opponents | OEF, ISAF, ANSF, GIRoA, Afghan Warlords |
| Rivals | HIG; internal rivalry between different networks; Afghan Political Opposition; Afghan Civil Society |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Removal of foreign soldiers from Afghan soil; "security for themselves, neutralizing the international and Afghan threat to them and ending the targeting of their leaders and families, international recognition as a legitimate political actor, removal of key leaders from UN terrorist lists, and release of prisoners, […] purge of corrupt government leaders and prosecuting or exiling unfriendly warlords" (Pickering 2011: 29-30); "law and order, especially as enforced by *ulema* (Islamic scholars) against criminals; application of sharia, involving harsher punishments and changes to the Afghan constitution; legitimate exercise of power or Islamic government; conformity with perceived Islamic social rules, involving further constraints on women; political, but possibly not administrative, power; […] peace and security" (Waldman 2010: 1); emancipation from the ISI |

The Taliban can be defined as "all those who acknowledge the leadership of Mullah Omar and of the Leadership Shura and who in turn are acknowledged by the leadership as members of the movement" (Giustozzi 2012b: 5). The first generation of the Taliban "grew from the Pashtun refugee camps, mostly in Pakistan, where a modified and selectively interpreted version of Wahabist Islam influenced some madrassa students (talib) to adopt an ultraconservative approach to social issues and politics." (Afsar, Samples, Wood 2008: 60) They put an end to the civil war between the various *Mujahideen* factions (⇨4) that had appeared after the withdrawal of the Red Army from Afghanistan and enforced "graveyard peace" in large parts of Afghanistan when they officially established their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 1996. They ruled until 2001, though they were unable to establish full control over all parts of the country.

Then, in the eyes of the Taliban, "the West invaded Afghanistan to prevent Islamic stability, to wipe out the nation's Islamic and religious values and norms, to divert the future generation from Islam, and to forever subjugate, occupy and secularize the Afghan Mujahid nation" (IEA 2013). Consequently, while formally ousted from power, the Taliban did not accept defeat and were "determined to regroup, reorganize, and fight again. They have done so to surprising effect, with

apparent support from some in the Pakistani intelligence services" (Pickering/Brahimi 2011: 21). The Taliban claim not to have a global agenda. They have targeted American and NATO forces on Afghan soil, but have so far restrained from committing terrorist attacks against the US (⇨ 7) or other NATO countries (⇨ 8). In comparison with other militant Islamists, the IEA is thus more of a national insurgency than a transnational (terrorist) movement. This finding is backed up by research that suggests that Taliban insurgents are motivated by a variety of primarily domestic drivers, including "retaliation for perceived military aggression by foreign forces, […] resistance to perceived invading infidel forces that threaten Afghan and Islamic values and culture; [...] resistance to officials regarded as dishonest, corrupt, and unjust, who benefit from impunity; [...] exclusion from power or resources" as well as "social and economic security for the destitute and unemployed" (Waldman 2010: 3-4).

Organizationally, the Taliban are a decentralized actor. This does not mean that the IEA is fragmented, rather that it is a composition of different networks: "The predominant mode of organization used by the Taliban is personal networks, formed around charismatic leaders" (Giustozzi 2010: 5). The four regional commands of the Taliban have "a great degree of autonomy in planning and implementation" (Giustozzi 2010: 9). The Peshawar Regional Military Shura is believed to be led by Abdul Latif Mansur, the commander of the Mansur network. Mansur also sits on the Miran Shah Regional Military Shura, which is led by Sirajuddin Haqqani (Checchia 2012: 1), the son of Jalaluddin Haqqani (⇨ 5.2), and he is the head of the Taliban Political Commission. The closeness of southeastern Taliban networks with the Pakistani ISI "is not appreciated by most other Taliban networks, who are either hostile to the Pakistani authorities […] or at the very least are unwilling to be controlled by the Pakistanis" (Giustozzi 2010: 14).

Mullah Omar, the "Commander of the Faithful," is the leader of the Islamic Emirate. While he "seems to be personally more inclined towards the ('moderate') positions of Mullah Baradar [currently believed to be the deputy leader of the IEA, A.B.] […] in practice as the leader of the movement as a whole he [Omar, A.B.] avoids siding too closely with any particular network" (Giustozzi 2009: 5). As a consequence, Mullah Omar has to carefully manage intra-Taliban negotiations in order not to alienate the moderates or the more radical factions, as well as to protect the integrity of the Islamic Emirate.

A key figure within the more radical wing of the Taliban is the young Mullah Zakir. He has emerged within the last years and is believed to be generally objected to peace negotiations. Overall, though, there are reasons to believe that the Taliban are willing to compromise as part of larger peace agreement: "Omar and his allies have been living in exile for over a decade, their children are growing up as Pakistanis, and their movements are surely watched and constrained by their Pakistani patrons. […] they live under the constant threat of assassination by U.S. drones or commando raids […] And the war imposes costs on the Taliban, too. […] Stalemate is costly enough that the Taliban might consider an offer if the process is not tantamount to capitulation" (Biddle 2013: 9).

In addition, while the Taliban have established shadow governments including a strictly Islamic judiciary in areas under their control, they have "increasingly encountered sharp resistance from the population when they have sought to re-impose the stern morality code of emirate days" (Brahimi/Pickering 2011: 23). This resistance has forced the Taliban to rethink their positions on issues such as education for girls and the notorious ban on music, which turned out to be so unpopular that Mullah Omar "issued a fatwa giving local field commanders discretion on enforcing the emirate's social edicts – and most have opted for a relatively relaxed attitude" (Brahimi/Pickering 2011: 23).

While the Taliban claim not to have an ethnic agenda, "there is no question that Pashtuns account for the overwhelming majority of the Taliban's ranks. [...] At the same time, however, it is clear that the Taliban have at least since 2006 carried out intense efforts to mobilize support among non-Pashtuns, with at least some success from 2008 onward" (Giustozzi 2012b: 58).

### 5.2 *The Haqqani Network (HQN)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Jalaluddin Haqqani, Sirajuddin Haqqani |
| Strong ties with | IEA, TTP, al-Qaeda |
| Notable ties with | Other militant Islamist groups (⇨10.3), ISI |
| Armed opponents | OEF, ISAF, ANSF, GIRoA, Afghan Warlords, Army of Pakistan, Army of India |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Maintain position as hub between various militant Islamist groups; "maintain its autonomy and influence in Loya Paktia and North Waziristan" (Rassler/Brown 2011: 15) instead of grabbing for power in Kabul; support global *Jihad* while avoiding to be openly associated with al-Qaeda or attacks against Pakistan |

The Haqqani network is a Afghan-Pakistani insurgent group with a unique function in the network of militant Islamism. The HQN was founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani who has served as its leader ever since. Haqqani fought against the Soviets and joined the Taliban government in the mid-90s. Today, the HQN counts between 10,000 and 15,000 fighters (Rassler/Brown 2011: 7) and serves as a hub between various Islamist groups (⇨10.3) by enhancing the transfer and exchange of material and ideological resources for the cause of transnational *Jihad*.

The strongholds of the HQN are the Afghan provinces of Khost, Paktia, and Paktika, as well as Pakistan's North Waziristan (Rassler/Brown 2011: 8). This strategically relevant location has enabled the HQN to function as the "primary conduit" (Rassler/Brown 2011: 5), helping many TTP fighters (⇨10.1) to access the war in Afghanistan, and to act as an "important regional platform for the [Afghan] Taliban [⇨5.1] to project power and influence in Southeastern Afghanistan" (Rassler/Brown 2011: 12). At the same time, analysts claim that the HQN has ties with the Pakistani ISI, and that Pakistan stated that it could "'deliver' the Haqqani network and reconcile it with President Karzai's Afghan government" (Rassler/Brown 2011: 50).

The HQN finances its activities "through licit and illicit businesses in Pakistan and the Persian Gulf and in controlling parts of Khost Province" (Katzman 2014a: 15) While the HQN "has carefully avoided any direct association with international terrorism or the targeting of Westerners outside of Afghanistan," (Rassler/Brown 2011: 49) it has been associated with attacks against Afghan, Pakistani, and Indian targets, and has close operational ties with TTP and al-Qaeda [⇨10.2] (Rassler/Brown 2011: 16).

### 5.3 *Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Islamic Party (HIG)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figure | Gulbuddin Hekmatyar |
| Notable ties with | IEA (occasionally) |
| Armed opponents | OEF, ISAF, ANSF, GIRoA, IEA (occasionally) |
| Rivals | IEA, Afghan Warlords |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Remove US and NATO forces from Afghan soil; replace the Afghan constitution with a more "Islamic" version; ensure survival of the HIG; come to a deal with GIRoA; prepare HIG for political role following such an agreement |

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar is one of the most prominent and illustrious figures in Afghan politics. Relying on generous financial support by the USA, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, he fought against the Red Army in the 1980s, was briefly Prime Minister of Afghanistan in the early 1990s, and fled to Iran when the Taliban rose to power. Since 2001, his Islamic Party (*Hezb-e Islami;* or *Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, HIG*) is waging a guerilla war against US and NATO forces.

Within the last decades, Hekmatyar has shifted his alliances so often that "in the view of many who have dealt with him, Hekmatyar has a proven record in breaking commitments" (Brahimi/Pickering 2011: 60). Consequently, the relationship between his HIG and the Taliban (⇨ 5.1) "can often be turbulent, as in this case: Hizb-i Islami and Taliban often fight each other in local context, while cooperate in others" (Giustozzi 2010: 6). In contrast to the Taliban, Hekmatyar has publicly and

repeatedly announced his willingness to enter into formal negotiations with the Afghan government (⇨ 2). He has authored dozens of books and a proposal for a renewed Afghan constitution.

Some of his followers have registered a wing of the Islamic Party with the Afghan authorities and they have won seats in the Afghan parliament.

## 6. The Afghan Civil Society

| | |
|---|---|
| Groups | ACSFo (umbrella organization), other NGOs such as ANCB, AWN, CSHRN, and FCCS; the CDCs; media and independent journalists; but also traditional institutions such as local *jirgas* and *shuras* |
| Notable ties with | UNAMA, USAID, foreign NGOs |
| Rivals | IEA, Afghan Warlords |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | A "credible election" in 2014 with "guaranteed participation", ensure "inclusiveness" of any political settlement between insurgency and government, review the role of the HPC, conduct any peace process under the leadership of a neutral mediator, strengthen "a regional and long-term approach", strengthen the rule of law, fight corruption, strengthen "transparency and accountability" (Afghan Civil Society Actors 2013); protect democratic rights, women's rights, and civil liberties |

While the term "civil society" has emerged in Afghanistan within the last decade in order to describe specific actors, there is no consensus about what it exactly captures (Winter 2010: 7). On one hand, traditional institutions such as *jirgas* and *shuras* as well as religious authorities could be considered part of the Afghan civil society. On the other hand, a number of organizations that have been founded since 2001 are more commonly referred to as official representatives of civil society.

When it comes to those people not holding positions of power in government, opposition, warlord militias, or insurgent groups, research suggests that people "feel that politics and government are imbued with ethnic division, that they have experienced discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity and that this has been exacerbated by both the Afghan Government and the international community" (Winter 2010: 9).

Decades of civil war have taken a heavy toll on the Afghan people: From 2001 to 2013, between 12,000 and 43,500 Afghan civilians have died in the war. Including the deaths of international and Afghan security forces, insurgents, journalists, and NGO workers, estimates vary widely from 30,000 to figures as high as 100,000, while the UN puts the number of civilian casualties in 2013 at 8,615, with 2,959 civilian deaths and 5,656 injured (UNAMA 2014: 1; Bell 2013: 3).

In general, people are "affected by a complexity of relationships, dependencies, power through weapons, money, influence and fear. While there are real differences of opinion between civil society actors, there are also misperceptions and long standing resentments" (Winter 2010: 58). Opinion polls suggest that insecurity (including attacks, violence and terrorism) ranks as the biggest problem "facing Afghanistan today, and it has consistently held this ranking since 2007" (Asia Foundation 2012: 12). At the same time, when asked about the reason for the armed conflict, 70% see "unemployment and poverty as a major cause of the conflict, while almost half (48%) pointed to the corruption and ineffectiveness of the Afghan government" (OXFAM 2009: 4).

Polls also suggest that a slight majority of Afghans see their country moving in the right direction (Asia Foundation 2012: 5), and state that "their families are more prosperous today than they were during the Taliban era" (Asia Foundation 2012: 14). At the same time, research conducted among households in the rural areas of Badakhshan, Kandahar, and Sar-i-Pul "found that while many have experienced improvements in access to basic services since 2002, livelihood security […] has declined for the majority. Changes outside of their control, including drought, the ban on opium poppy cultivation and rising global food prices, led to large decreases in agricultural production or threatened food security" (Kantor/Pain 2011: 1).

Polls and qualitative research also indicate significant differences between the Afghan provinces as well as a notable rural/urban divide when it comes to political preferences. People from the cities tend to be more liberal, while inhabitants of rural areas tend to be more conservative. This cleavage can be traced back to the century-old history of the silk road which integrated the Afghan cities in a "cosmopolitan trade network" and left the rural provinces untouched (Schetter 2004: 12).

While the insurgency is very unpopular in the eyes of the Afghans – two thirds have no sympathies for them at all (Asia Foundation 2012: 58) – there is a "consistent high level of support for the government's efforts in the area of reconciliation and reintegration," which "suggests that an overwhelming proportion of the Afghan respondents want a political solution to the conflict in the country, rather than merely a military one" (Asia Foundation 2012: 14).

## 7. The United States of America (USA)

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Barack Obama, John Kerry, Chuck Hagel, Susan Rice, John McCain |
| Factions | White House, Congress, Pentagon, State Department, Republicans, Democrats |
| Subordinated | CIA, OEF |
| Memberships | NATO |
| Strong ties with | NATO, GIRoA, Afghan Warlords, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Pakistan, India, Turkey |
| Notable ties with | *Jundallah* (⇨ 10.3) |
| Armed opponents | Al-Qaeda, IEA, HQN, HIG, TTP |
| Rivals | Iran, Russia, China |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | "preventing the resurgence of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan; assisting a reasonable stable, friendly, autonomous Afghanistan; preventing further Afghan violence from destabilizing Pakistan; preserving democratic and human rights in Afghanistan; continuing credibility for NATO; reducing illicit drug trade" (Pickering 2011: 30) |

While the US-led invasion of Afghanistan was originally aimed at destroying al-Qaeda (⇨ 10.2) and ousting the Taliban (⇨ 5.1) from power, the mission evolved into multilateral nation-building that was met with increasing resistance by an armed insurgency. The Bush administration "was never able to reconcile the tensions between countering terrorism and promoting democracy. […] As such, when the Obama administration inherited the Afghanistan campaign, the situation was worse than that which had been seen at the start of the war. This has resulted in the Obama administration abandoning the notion of democracy promotion in favour of transferring power as quickly as possible to an illegitimate Afghan government" (Hassan/Hammond 2011: 532). Critics argue that a "flawed state-building process," "unfavourable 'allies' and misjudgement of the Taliban," combined with a "flawed counter-insurgency and an inconclusive 'surge'" as well as a "lack of a political strategy and dependence on Afghan forces" (Waldman 2013) eventually led to the failure of US attempts to rebuild Afghanistan and defeat the insurgency.

Today, Afghanistan does not rank prominently on the political agenda in the US. Polarized debates about health care, the debt ceiling, and the economy are of much higher relevance, and the public has the general impression that America's war in Afghanistan is coming to an end. Political observers point out that the US has only two main objectives in Afghanistan: "that Afghanistan not become a base for terrorism against the West, and that chaos in Afghanistan not destabilize its neighbors, especially Pakistan" (Biddle 2013: 4). At the same time, negotiations with the insurgency are unpopular: "Many U.S. conservatives doubt the Administration's motives in the talks, fearing giveaways to cover an Administration rush to the exits and worrying that negotiation signals weakness. American progressives fear the loss of hard-won gains for Afghan women and minorities in concessions to the Taliban" (Biddle 2013: 8). In spite of the current general lack of interest in the conflict, the US will remain a key player in Afghanistan, since the ANSF heavily rely on ongoing US support in their war against the insurgency (⇨ 5).

## 8. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., Barack Obama (USA), Angela Merkel (Germany), David Cameron (UK), François Hollande (France) |
| Subordinated | ISAF |
| Strong ties with | GIRoA, Afghan Warlords |
| Notable ties with | UN, India |
| Armed opponents | IEA, HQN, HIG |
| Rivals | Russia, China, Iran |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Maintain stability and security in Afghanistan; support GIRoA and ANSF; assume leadership of new assistance mission to be established in 2015; demonstrate own relevance and capabilities |

While NATO invoked Article 5 of its charter after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and while NATO members joined the US in its "Operation Enduring Freedom" against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, it was not until 2003 that NATO officially assumed leadership of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that had been established by the UN (⇨ 9) Security Council. ISAF is operating under a UN Chapter VII mandate that has been extended by the UNSC on an annual basis, and the follow-up mission is likely to obtain a UN mandate as well. "ISAF represents NATO's first significant out-of-area deployment, and it is viewed by many observers as a key test for the Alliance – a measure of both its current capabilities and its possible future relevance" (Dale 2011: 22).

While the intensity of the armed conflict was relatively low until 2005 (Bell 2013: 4), U.S. Army General David McKiernan acknowledged in the end of 2008 that the situation had escalated: "We are at war in Afghanistan. It's not peacekeeping. It's not stability operations. It's not humanitarian assistance. It's war" (quoted in Bowman/Dale 2009: 14). In order to deal with the growing insurgency, ISAF enacted "a greater resourced, population-centric counterinsurgency strategy" (Brand 2011: vii) that relied on "integrated, population-centric approaches that engage traditional local political authorities, civil society, and a wide range of religious actors" instead of "militarized strategies focused on killing the enemy" (Bruton 2009: 81). The number of NATO troops in Afghanistan (ISAF and OEF combined) peaked at more than 150,000. The idea was that the "surge" would significantly weaken the insurgency in order to allow a smooth transition to the ANSF by the end of the ISAF mission in 2014. However, "this has not happened. Tight deadlines for U.S. withdrawal combined with Taliban resilience have left insurgents in control of enough critical terrain to remain a threat well after 2014" (Biddle 2013: 6).

## 9. The United Nations (UN)

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Ban Ki-moon, Ján Kubiš |
| Subordinated | UNAMA, UNSC, UNGA, UNHRC, World Bank |
| Cooperates with | NATO, ISAF, GIRoA, ADB, ICRC, OIC, Istanbul Process |
| Armed opponents | IEA, HQN, HIG, TTP |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Support a peaceful security transition from NATO to GIRoA (Margesson 2010); reinforce legal electoral foundation and strengthen democratic institutions to ensure fair electoral process without violence during the presidential elections; encourage public acceptance of the outcomes; reduce opium production and drug trafficking that fund the insurgency; maintain human rights gains and continue coordination efforts for monitoring and protecting human rights (UNHRC 2014) |

The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a special political mission led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It was established by the UNSC in 2002 following the 2001 Bonn Conference.

Although UNAMA "has built a fair amount of credibility with the Afghan public with its outreach to civil society," (Brahimi/Pickering 2011: 57) it lacks a political basis for peace, a suitable mandate, and

the resources necessary for the mandate's implementation, criteria which usually define a successful peacekeeping operation (Chesterman 2002: 39). Insecurity and ongoing armed conflict in Afghanistan as well as high-level corruption of state authorities challenge its mission to coordinate international civilian efforts during the security transition. Although the UNSC has recently extended UNAMA's mandate until 2015, funding the mission's activities remains a major issue on the UN's agenda.

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (⇨ 5.1) does not perceive the UN as a neutral actor, but one controlled by the US. Most recent statistics indicate that in 2013 "civilian deaths and injuries from conflict-related violence increased by 10 percent compared to the same period in 2012. […] Child casualties were 36 percent higher than those recorded in 2012" (UNHRC 2014). However, the Taliban profoundly disagree with official UN statistics according to which the insurgency is responsible for three quarters of all civilian deaths and injuries, and claim that UNAMA reports on civilian casualties are "directly produced by the US embassy and then published under the name of [the] United Nations" (IEA 2014a).

## 10. Militant Islamism in Pakistan

The Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan, which border Afghanistan, are "home to over roughly 45,000 militants and forty militant groups" (Qazi 2011: 1). Though they maintain various connections, their political goals are for the most part different.

### *10.1 The Pakistani Taliban (TTP)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Maulana Fazlullah, Khalid Haqqani, Qari Shakeel |
| Relevant divisions | Strong local networks, Supreme Shura, various *shuras* |
| Strong ties with | HQN, LeI, LeJ, TNSM, HuJI, JeM, al-Qaeda |
| Notable ties with | IEA (in its war in Afghanistan) |
| Armed opponents | Pakistani Army, ANSF, NATO, USA, ISAF, OEF |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Strict enforcement of Islamic Law in Pakistan; removal of US and NATO forces from Afghanistan; end cooperation between Washington and Islamabad; prevent recognition of Durand line |

The Taliban Movement of Pakistan (*Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan*, TTP) is a network of various militant Islamists groups that united in 2007 to fight against the NATO forces (⇨ 8) in Afghanistan and against the Pakistani Army (⇨ 11.1). Its origins can be traced back to the 1980s, when Pakistan and the USA "used the FATA as launching pads for sponsored mujahideen […]. The sprouting of madrassas, an abundance of modern weaponry, and an influx of Afghan refugees radicalized the environment. […] many foreign mujahideen (mostly Arabs) settled in the FATA and were absorbed into tribes through marriage. Due to ethnic, religious, ideological, and cultural affinities, the area's residents viewed the Taliban's rise favorably" (Afsar/Samples/Wood 2008: 60).

While the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was a substantial mobilizing factor for the TTP, "it was the Pakistan Army's 2002 invasion of the tribal areas that transformed the existing widespread militancy into a full-blown insurgency" (Qazi 2011: 2). The TTP is ideologically less coherent than the IEA, different factions prioritize either the armed struggle in Afghanistan or in Pakistan, and followers are driven by a variety of motives, from local grievances and criminal activities to the involvement in drug trade. The TTP is also known for its opposition against foreign aid workers and believes that polio vaccinations conducted in Pakistani villages by the WHO are part of a Christian-Western conspiracy conducted in order to make Muslims impotent.

A key feature of the TTP is "their alliance with al-Qaeda [⇨ 10.2], including personal relations dating back to the days of the Soviet-Afghan war" (Qazi 2011: 1). The TTP is associated with the failed terrorist attack on the New York Times Square in 2010, after which the US officially labeled the TTP a foreign terrorist organization. Faisal Shahzad, the "times square bomber," justified his action as retribution for the US drone attacks in Pakistan. From 2004-2012, these CIA drone strikes killed

"2,562-3,325 people in Pakistan, of whom 474-881 were civilians, including 176 children" (Standford/NYU 2012: vi) While the IEA is believed to have moved away from al-Qaeda within the last decade, "the Pakistani Taliban have moved in the opposite direction due to their alliance with al-Qaeda and other al-Qaeda aligned groups" (Qazi 2011: 9). However, there has recently been some progress regarding negotiations between Islamabad and TTP representatives.

*10.2 Al-Qaeda*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Ayman al-Zawahiri, Nasir al-Wuhayshi, Abu Bakr Naji |
| Relevant factions | AQIM, HSM, EIJ, AQAP, Al-Nusra Front |
| Strong ties with | TTP, HQN, IMU, ETIM, LeT, HuJi, JeM, IJU; also: JI, ASG, MUJWA |
| Notable ties with | IEA |
| Armed opponents | USA, GIRoA, NATO, Pakistan, India, Iran (and others) |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Liberate the Muslim World from American occupation; establish world-wide Islamic caliphate; overthrow governments in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the associated political orders |

According to the fatwa issued by Osama bin Laden (1957-2011), Ayman al-Zawahiri, and others in 1998, "The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies – civilian and military – is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim" (as quoted in FAS 2014). Al-Qaeda's ideology draws from Salafism and Wahabism as well as from the writings from Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966), an Egyptian Islamic theorist. Al-Qaeda considers non-Sunni Muslims "infidels" and is responsible for sectarian violence; most victims of its terrorist attacks are of Muslim faith.

13 years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, "U.S. officials put the number of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan at between 50-100, who operate mostly in provinces of eastern Afghanistan such as Kunar" (Katzman 2014a: 13-14). However, al-Qaeda continues to maintain a presence and influence in the FATA, and it has strong ties with other militant Islamist groups. Factions of al-Qaeda also operate in Syria (Al-Nusra Front), Saudi Arabia and Yemen (AQAP), and Northern Africa (AQIM, HSM, EIJ). The head of the US Special Operations Command, Admiral William McRaven, said in early 2014 that "there is a threat of an Al Qaeda resurgence in Afghanistan if all U.S. troops depart Afghanistan at the end of 2014" (Katzman 2014a: 13-14).

*10.3 Other Militant Islamist Groups*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, Fazlur Rehman Khalil, Masood Azhar, Maulana Fazlullah, Mangal Bagh, Abu Zar al-Burmi, Muhammad Dhahir Baluch |
| Groups | LeT, HuJi, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, HUM, JeM, LeJ, TNSM, LeI, IMU, ETIM, SSP, *Jundallah*, *Jundallah* (PRMI), others |
| Notable ties with | Internal cooperation, as well as exchange with IEA, TTP, HQN, HIG (occasionally), and al-Qaeda, yet different degree of support; donors from the Arab States of the Persian Gulf |
| Armed Opponents | Pakistan, India, GIRoA, China, USA, Uzbekistan, Iran, and others; depending on the group |
| Rivals | Internal rivalry due to political differences and personal disputes |
| Relevance of conflict | High |
| Key interests | Enforcement of their strict interpretation of Islamic law; distinct political goals, ranging from separatist ambitions to support for the Afghan or Pakistani insurgency and to global *Jihad* |

While the overall number and individual strength of the different militant Islamists groups is constantly changing, they share a conservative Sunni interpretation of Islamic law and the disdain for non-Muslim interference in Muslim lands. Key issues are the US-led invasion of Afghanistan as well as the Kashmir conflict between Pakistan (⇨ 11.1) and India (⇨ 11.2).

Perhaps the most prominent group besides the TTP is *Lashkar-e-Taiba* (**LeT**, "Army of the Good"). Its main theatre of operation is the Kashmir valley, though it was also involved in the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks. It sees its struggle to liberate Kashmir from Indian occupation as part of a global *Jihad*. There are indicators that LeT funding can be traced back to sources in Saudia Arabia (⇨12.1) and that it maintains ties with the ISI (⇨11.1). LeT has so far been focused on attacks against Indian targets, but is "said to be increasingly active inside Afghanistan" (Katzman 2014a: 16).

*Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami* (**HuJi,** "Movement for the Struggle of Islam") has committed terrorist attacks in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan and aims to integrate Kashmir into Pakistan. *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen* ("Party of the Mujahideen") pursues the same goal and some believe it has ties with the ISI. Same can be said about *Harkat-ul-Mujahideen-al-Islami* (**HUM,** "Movement of the Islamic Mujahideen"). *Jaish-e-Mohammad* (**JeM,** "Army of Mohammad") shares the separatist agenda and is considered to be one of the most dangerous and radical organizations in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. *Lashkar-e-Jhangvi* (**LeJ,** "Army of Jhangvi") has been involved in terrorist attacks against mostly Shia Muslims in Pakistan that have killed hundreds of civilians within the last years, and was also accused of "several attacks on Afghanistan's Hazara Shiite community during 2011-2012" (Katzman 2014a: 16). LeJ is named after Haq Nawaz Jhangvi (1952-1990), a Sunni preacher who founded the *Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan* (**SSP**), another militant Islamist organization. The *Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi* (**TNSM,** "Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law") fights for the strict enforcement of Islamic Law in Pakistan and has significant influence in the Swat valley in Northern Pakistan. The former leader of the TNSM, Maulana Fazlullah, assumed leadership of the TTP (⇨10.1) when its previous leader was killed by a US drone strike in 2013. *Lashkar-e-Islam* (**LeI,** "Army of Islam") is led by the illustrious Islamist Mangal Bagh who claims to be opposed to terrorist attacks and the TTP, despite similar ideological beliefs (Zaidi 2008: 12).

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (**IMU**) aims to overthrow Islam Karimov (⇨13.2) in order to install a Muslim caliphate in Uzbekistan and is proud of its ties with the Afghan Taliban. The East Turkestan Islamic Movement (**ETIM**) aims to establish an independent state in the Chinese autonomous region of Xingjiang and is blamed by Beijing for terrorism, extremism, and separatism. Finally, two organizations call themselves the "Soldiers of God." The *Jundallah* of former TTP Emir Hakimullah Mehsud was involved in terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The *Jundallah* led by Muhammad Dhahir Baluch claims to fight for the interests of oppressed Sunni Muslims in mostly Shia Iran, while the Iranian government accuses *Jundallah* of terrorist activities and separatism. Observers believe that the Balochi *Jundallah*, also known as People's Resistance Movement of Iran (**PRMI**), maintains ties with the ISI as well as with the CIA (⇨ 7): "America is secretly funding militant ethnic separatist groups in Iran in an attempt to pile pressure on the Islamic regime to give up its nuclear programme" (Lowther/Freeman 2007).

## 11. The Regional Powers

The interests of several middle and regional powers clash in Central Asia. Russia, China, and the US compete for influence (⇨13); Pakistan and India struggle over Kashmir; and Iran and Saudi Arabia (⇨12.1) vie for religious leadership.

### *11.1 The Islamic Republic of Pakistan*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Asif Ali Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Zaheerul Islam |
| Relevant factions | Political parties, ISI, Pakistan Army, SCOP |
| Memberships | Istanbul Process, OIC, SCO (observer) |
| Strong ties with | USA, Saudi Arabia |
| Notable ties with | China, IEA (via ISI) |
| Armed opponents | TTP; HQN; LeT; HuJi; JeM; other Islamist and separatist groups, such as BLA and BLF in Baluchistan |
| Rivals | India |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | "ensuring a neutral, stable Kabul government with the Afghan Taliban as a junior partner; supporting Afghan and U.S. operations against the Pakistan Taliban; withdrawing the United States and NATO in phases, but with continuing military and economic aid thereafter; limiting Indian influence, including effective checks on aid to the Baloch insurgency; expanding trade and investment in Afghanistan" (Pickering 2011: 30); prevent creation of an independent "Pashtunistan;" recognition of the Afghan-Pakistani border ("Durand line") by Kabul |

Pakistan is arguably the country whose future is most intertwined with the conflict in Afghanistan. "Pakistan's goal is that Afghanistan, at the very least, not align with rival India [⇨ 11.2], and, at best, provide Pakistan strategic depth against India. Pakistan says India is using its Embassy and four consulates in Afghanistan (Pakistan says India has nine consulates) to recruit anti-Pakistan insurgents, and that India is using its aid programs only to build influence there" (Katzman 2014a: 45). Thus, while Pakistan plays a key role in Afghanistan, Islamabad sees its "security interests in Afghanistan primarily with reference to India. Emblematic of these is [also] the issue of Islamabad's troubled region of Balochistan, where Pakistani officials allege India has been able to foment unrest by exploiting its enhanced role in Afghanistan" (Brahimi/Pickering 2011: 68).

While Islamabad has officially stated that it is willing to participate in negotiations to end the conflict in Afghanistan, and while it has stated that it has means to guarantee the participation of the Afghan Taliban – thus indirectly admitting the dangerous ties between the ISI and the IEA (⇨ 5.1) – its foreign relations with Kabul (⇨ 2) are further "complicated by the continuing dispute over the Durand Line, by the presence of Taliban safe havens in Pakistan, and by Pakistani perception of some senior Afghan officials' hostility to Pakistan" (Pickering/Brahimi 2011: 11).

Internally, Pakistan faces severe energy problems, political instability, a popular mistrust in the political elites, and terrorist and separatist activities. According to the Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS), "militant, nationalist insurgent and violent sectarian groups carried out a total of 1,717 terrorist attacks across Pakistan in 2013, claiming the lives of 2,451 people and causing injuries to another 5,438" (Express Tribune 2014). Since 9/11, Pakistan has "deployed over 100,000 troops to different parts of the FATA" to fight the Taliban [⇨ 10.1] and their allies (Afsar/Samples/Wood 2008: 60). Observers note that "with a population of 193 million (six times Afghanistan's), a GDP of over $230 billion (over ten times Afghanistan's) and an actual, existing, functional nuclear arsenal, a failed Pakistan would be a much more dangerous sanctuary for al Qaeda" than Afghanistan (Biddle 2013: 5).

### *11.2 The Republic of India*[3]

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Pranab Mukherjee, Pranab Mukherjee, Salman Khurshid, A. K. Antony, Sushilkumar Shinde |
| Relevant divisions | Multi-party system; substantial political and cultural cleavages; state of Jammu and Kashmir, claimed as disputed by Pakistan |
| Memberships | Istanbul Process, SCO (observer) |
| Strong ties with | USA, Russia |
| Notable ties with | Tajikistan, Afghan Civil Society, GIRoA, Qatar |
| Armed opponents | HuJi; *Hizb-ul-Mujahideen*; JeM |
| Rivals | China, Pakistan |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | "a friendly, or at least neutral, Afghanistan not dominated by the Taliban or other Pakistan proxies; eliminating al-Qaeda and other Islamic extremists who target India; preserving a presence in Afghanistan, including political and military intelligence capacities; expanding trade and investment, including transit routes through Pakistan; ensuring basic human rights in Afghanistan; strengthening growing strategic partnership with the United States" (Pickering 2011: 31) |

With a population of 1.2 billion people, India is the world's largest democracy. "Scholars estimate that only the continent of Africa exceeds the linguistic, cultural, and genetic diversity of India" (Library of Congress 2004: 7). India sees its interest in the conflict primarily as it relates to Pakistan (⇨ 11.1), which it seeks to prevent from realizing "strategic depth" in Afghanistan.

India aims to "deny Pakistan the ability to block India from trade and other connections to Central Asia and beyond, and to prevent militants in Afghanistan from attacking Indian targets in Afghanistan" (Katzman 2014a: 49-50). India and Pakistan, as well as China, have fought several wars over the disputed Kashmir region.[4] New Delhi is concerned that its interests in Afghanistan will be marginalized if the government is dominated by Pashtuns who it believes to be closer to Pakistan. It is very critical of talks with "moderate Taliban" because of "concerns over whether such a group really exists" (Price 2013: 5).

India is very active in regional development and economic cooperation, and its foreign aid to Afghanistan has both humanitarian and strategic motivations: "Most of India's assistance has gone to traditional developmental projects such as training civil servants, constructing wells, power plants and transmission lines, and building and staffing hospitals. Other projects have clear strategic functions: the construction of a road linking Afghanistan to the Iranian port of Chabahar, and the recent announcement that India would renovate the port itself, has created an alternative route for Indian goods to travel to Afghanistan" which sidelines Pakistan (Price 2013: 5).

India is very popular in the Afghan society and has "provided training for Afghan businesspeople on international trade and lifted tariffs on most Afghan exports to India, not to mention India's desire to link to Afghanistan's central Bamyan province through […] Chabahar, thereby accessing Afghanistan's largest known iron ore mine in Hajigak (where an Indian consortium already has won the extraction contract)" (Kazemi 2013).

3 Please note that this paper was finalized before the 2014 Indian general election.

4 For more information on the conflict, see Köchler 2008.

### *11.3 The Islamic Republic of Iran*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Ali Hosseini Khamenei, Hassan Rouhani, Ali Larijani, Sadeq Larijani, Ahmad Jannati, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani |
| Relevant factions | Supreme Leader, President, Parliament, Guardian Council, Revolutionary Guards, Expediency Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Memberships | Istanbul Process, OIC, SCO (observer) |
| Strong ties with | Unity Party |
| Notable ties with | GIRoA, Ismail Khan, some IEA commanders, Russia |
| Armed opponents | *Jundallah* (PRMI) |
| Rivals | Saudi Arabia, USA |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | "withdrawal of U.S. and ISAF military and intelligence forces; a stable regime in Kabul, friendly to Iran, and not dominated by Pakistan or its proxies; protection for traditional Iranian allies in Afghanistan: Hazaras, Tajiks, and Heratis; trade, investment, and transit trade through Char Bahar; return of 2 to 3 million Afghan refugees in Iran; reduction/elimination of narcotics trafficking; Kabul cooperation in fight against Jundallah [PRMI], in Iranian Baluchistan and beyond" (Pickering 2011: 31) |

Iran has a multifaceted involvement in the Afghanistan conflict. On one hand, Tehran "continues to oppose the presence of Western military bases in Afghanistan, engages in talks with Taliban, invites them for conferences in Iran and even, allegedly, supplies arms to them. At the same time, it provides Afghanistan with technical and financial support" (Daud 2014: 9). This contradiction can be traced back to two different sets of motives:

On one hand, Iran has strong ties with the Afghan border province of Herat and with the Hazara in Afghanistan who, like 90% of all Iranians, are Shia Muslims. Thus, Tehran has supported the reconstruction of Afghanistan, especially in its Western provinces. In addition, Iran is suffering from the drugs smuggled into the country from Afghanistan and interested in developing short-term and long-term policies to tackle this problem. Thus, some Iranian interests are surprisingly aligned with those of the US, a key Iranian rival in regards to other aspects of the conflict.

On the other hand, Tehran feels encircled by the US military and intelligence presence along its borders and is objected to long-term US installations in Afghanistan. US support for Saudi Arabia and *Jundallah* (⇨ 10.3) are other sources of concern for Iran. Thus, Tehran has established channels of communication with the Afghan insurgency, and its Revolutionary Guards are believed to support Taliban commanders. It has also "allowed a Taliban office to open in Iran, and a high-level Taliban delegation traveled from Qatar to Iran in early June 2013 (prior to the opening of the Taliban office there) for meetings with Iranian officials. […] While some see the contacts as Iranian support of the insurgency, others see it as an effort to exert some influence over reconciliation efforts" (Katzman 2014a: 49).

### *11.4 The Republic of Turkey*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül, Ahmet Davutoğlu, Efkan Ala, Hakan Fidan |
| Subordinated | Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MİT, TIKA |
| Memberships | Istanbul Process, NATO, OIC, SCO (dialogue partner) |
| Strong ties with | USA |
| Notable ties with | Afghanistan, Pakistan, National Islamic Movement, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan |
| Armed Opponents | Al-Qaeda |
| Rivals | Iran, Russia |
| Relevance of conflict | Low |
| Key finterests | Strengthen its position as an autonomous actor in the Middle East and Central Asia (Giustozzi 2013: 9); promote indivisibility of regional security and politics of non-interference (Kordaş 2013); support a strong, central Kabul that includes all major Afghan groups (Kordaş 2013: 8-9); support Turkic peoples in Afghanistan and Central Asia; encourage economic ties between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Weitz 2011; Kordaş 2013: 10-17); protect Turkish construction sector in Afghanistan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey 2013); maintain its presence in Afghanistan past the withdrawal of NATO troops |

Turkey has a long-term commitment to assist Afghanistan because of their shared historical cultural bonds and Islamic culture. Still, Ankara's active engagement in cooperative security measures should also be interpreted in the context of the transformation of Turkey's foreign policy over the last few years. In order to strengthen its position as an autonomous actor in the Middle East and Central Asia, Ankara pursues an assertive role in regional politics and provides substantial aid through its TIKA development agency (Kordaş 2013). In addition, Ankara has led a variety of diplomatic initiatives in the region.

Turkey is a secular democracy and 99% of its people are Muslim. It is the only NATO member state that is also a member of the OIC. While Turkey contributes troops to ISAF, it limits their involvement to logistical assistance and capacity building for the ANSF (Kaya 2013: 23-24) and prohibits their participation in combat operations on Muslim lands. In line with its strong belief that security is tied to governance and economic development, Ankara assists Kabul (⇨ 2) in these areas (Kordaş 2013: 5-7). The Turkish government supports a PRT model that focuses on "the fields of education, health, and infrastructure" (Kaya 2013: 24). Based in some of the poorest regions, Turkish PRTs have been established in Wardak and Jawzjan provinces with security provided by US forces. It is unclear to what extent Turkey will be able to continue its civilian programs without the security umbrella established by the US (Kaya 2013: 24-29).

Ankara presents itself as a neutral mediator in Afghanistan and beyond and refrains from utilizing its ethnic ties with the Uzbek and Turkmen communities in a purely instrumental way. Ankara even encourages other regional actors to forgo "jockeying for influence" in the fragile state (Kordaş 2013: 16). However, sources indicate that educational opportunities provided for young Afghans have facilitated the formation of a pro-Turkish wing of Dostum's (⇨ 4) Uzbek National Islamic Movement (Giustozzi 2012a: 16-17).

Ankara has also hosted eight summits between Turkey, Afghanistan (⇨ 2), and Pakistan (⇨ 11.1) since 2007. The meetings focused on counter-terrorism activities and intelligence sharing in addition to economic development and joint military exercises. However, the trilateral summits have not yet produced great changes in the complicated relationship between Kabul and Islamabad (Kordaş 2013: 23). In addition, Ankara is the driving force behind the Istanbul Process for Regional Cooperation in the "Heart of Asia." As part of this process, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, the UAE, and Uzbekistan coordinate political consultations, CBMs, and their policies vis-à-vis Afghanistan.

*11.5 The People's Republic of China*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Xi Jinpeng, Li Keqiang, Zhang Dejiang, Yu Zhengsheng, Liu Yunshan, Wang Qishan, Zhang Gaoli |
| Institutions | Central Committee, Politburo, and Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; state-owned enterprises |
| Memberships | SCO, Istanbul Process |
| Strong ties with | Pakistan |
| Notable ties with | Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyztan, Turkmenistan |
| Armed Opponents | ETIM |
| Rivals | USA, NATO |
| Relevance of conflict | Low |
| Key interests | "secure access to Afghan minerals and resources," arguably, help Pakistan "avoid encirclement by India" (Katzman 2014a: 54); contain the spread of militant Islamism; maintain regional stability; control separatist ambititions in Xinjiang |

While China shares a very small border with Afghanistan, "official Chinese policy in Central Asia is quiet and cautious, focused on developing the region as an economic partner with its western province Xinjiang." (Kim/Indeo 2013: 280) The China Metallurgical Group Corporation (CMGCC) secured the $900 million contract for the Aynak copper mine in Afghanistan, and "as far as infrastructure building and resource extraction go, Moscow and Beijing, not Washington, increasingly see one another as rivals in Central Asia. Central Asian security falls in a natural Russian [⇨ 11.6] sphere of influence, while Central Asian energy and economics falls in a Chinese sphere of influence" (Kim/Indeo 2013: 280).

China has "long-time close relations with Pakistan [⇨ 11.1]" (Pickering/Brahimi 2011: 12) and often relies on Pakistan for assessing Afghan politics. However, in 2011, "following China's rising economic interest in Afghanistan and a clash between the two countries on the issue of the training of Uyghur Islamist groups in Pakistan, did the Chinese government raise the profile and information-gathering activities of its embassy in Kabul" (Giustozzi 2013: 3). Observers also believe that Beijing has reached out to the Taliban in order to maintain influence in Afghanistan after 2014. Motivations include the desire to control Islamism and separatism in Xinjiang as well as the protection of its economic projects in Afghanistan, which may be at risk following ISAF's withdrawal. At the same time, it publically sends "reassuring messages to the Afghan government" (Daud 2014: 8). While China does not want the US (⇨ 7) or NATO (⇨ 8) to establish a permanent military presence in Afghanistan, "Chinese experts fear that a complete NATO military withdrawal from Central Asia would contribute to regional instability and terrorism" (Kim/Indeo 2013: 280).

*11.6 The Russian Federation*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Vladimir Putin, Sergey Lavrov, Sergey Ivanov, Viktor Ivanov |
| Subordinated | FSB, Gazprom |
| Memberships | CIS, EAU, SCO, Istanbul Process, CSTO, OIC (observer status) |
| Strong ties with | India, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan |
| Notable ties with | Iran, Pakistan, warlords from Northern Afghanistan such as Mohammad Fahim (1957-2014) |
| Armed Opponents | IMU, al-Qaeda |
| Rivals | USA, NATO, China |
| Relevance of conflict | Low |
| Key interests | Advance economic integration with the Eurasian Union; contain militant Islamism; control US influence in Central Asia; support a stable central Kabul that is able to control its territories and combat terrorist activities (Jones/Crane 2013: 12); combat drug-trafficking from Afghanistan; ensure that energy interests are not threatened by Beijing (Trenin 2010: 73; Harooni 2014) |

Two major factors are important in assessing Russia's limited involvement in the Afghanistan conflict, in spite of its status as a key player in the region (Daud 2014: 7). On one hand, Russia has a long history of colonial and cultural ties with the Central Asian republics (⇨ 13). On the other hand,

negative memories of the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan have resulted in the so-called "Afghan syndrome" among Russia's government and public, which rejects Russian participation in the conflict (Trenin: 74; Giustozzi 2013: 8).

Moscow aims to sustain its influence in Central Asia and continues to recruit various Central Asian states (as well as Belarus) for a Eurasian Union, though with varying degrees of success. Some observers argue that Russian strategy is shifting from "regional mediation" and influence maximization "to a more focused logic of hierarchy. Russia seems to be abandoning its previous doctrine of exerting general regional influence in favor of pursuing more focused influence and integration with Kazakhstan [⇨ 13.4], Kyrgyzstan [⇨ 13.5], and Tajikistan [⇨ 13.1]" (Cooley/Laurelle 2013: 1-2).

In spite of these efforts, Moscow supports US operations in Afghanistan and is likely to provide support for anti-Taliban leaders in Northern Afghanistan in case the Taliban return to Kabul in the future (Jones/Crane 2013: 12; Laub 2013). Potential spillover effects of a collapsing Afghanistan in Central Asia are a big concern for Russia, which is afraid of the spread of militant Islamism. Of prominent concern is Islamic radicalism in Uzbekistan (⇨ 13.2) and Kyrgyzstan (⇨ 13.5) as well as drug trafficking from Afghanistan which has increased in the last years (Trenin 2010: 72; Lundin/Kaathoven 2013: 1). The latter remains a great concern for Moscow as nearly 90 percent of the narcotics present in Russia are of Afghan origin (Lundin/Kaathoven: 1).

## 12. The Arab States of the Persian Gulf

While Bahrain contributes a moderate number of troops to ISAF, the most relevant actors from the Persian Gulf in the context of the Afghanistan conflict are Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Qatar. These are not only among the region's richest states, owing to their booming oil profits, but also among the most assertive ones when it comes to foreign relations.[5]

Their future engagement with Afghanistan is likely to be shaped by two major factors. First, their discontent with US positions in the Syrian Civil War and in the negotiations with Iran. Second, by the potential contribution they can make to reconciliation and mediation in Afghanistan. Doha has tried to play a lead role in negotiations and welcomed the opening of an official bureau of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (⇨ 5.1) in Qatar. However, the related negotiations between the Taliban, the Afghan government (⇨ 2), and the international community that the office was intended to channel broke down.

### *12.1 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | King Abdullah, Prince Muqrin, Prince Mohammad bin Nayef, Prince Bandar, Saud Al Faisal |
| Subordinated | General Intelligence Presidency, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Saudi Development Fund, wealthy donors |
| Memberships | OIC, Istanbul Process |
| Strong ties with | Pakistan, USA |
| Notable ties with | Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, WML, WAMY, Wahabi groups |
| Armed Opponents | Al-Qaeda (AQAP) |
| Rivals | Iran |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | Implement a more active foreign policy in the global Muslim community (Boucek 2010: 46); favor reconciliation with the Taliban and an Islamic government that maintains religious values and moral restrictions (Mir 2010: 46-48); provide off-budget and private assistance and foreign aid for the reconstruction of Afghanistan to demonstrate Islamic leadership (Mir 2010: 14); contain Iranian influence in Afghanistan (Mir 2010: 13) and in the region |

5 For more information, see Katzman 2014a, Katzman 2014b.

Saudi Arabia shares borders with Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, and Yemen. A predominantly Sunni state and a regional power, it seeks to contain Iranian (⇨ 11.3) Shia influence by providing support to radical Sunni groups within Afghanistan (Mir 2010: 13) and the wider region. For instance, funding for radical madrassas in Pakistan (Mir 2010: 13) can be traced back to donors from Saudi Arabia. Young Afghans, Chechens, Pakistanis, Uzbeks, and others that were educated at these schools have been known to fight alongside the Taliban (⇨ 5.1) over the last twelve years (Daud 2014: 5-6). The Saudis are also thought to depend on the Pakistani military (⇨ 11.1) to deliver funds to Islamist groups in Afghanistan (Mir 2010: 13).

While these efforts to spread Wahabism are at odds with US attempts (⇨ 7) to fight militant Islamism (⇨ 10), it is difficult for Washington to detect the flow of illicit Saudi funds that support IEA (⇨ 5.1) military operations in Afghanistan (Mir 2010: 48-49; Tellis, 2010: 110). The versatile involvement of Saudi Arabia in the Afghanistan conflict is completed by its attempts to encourage Kabul's reconciliation with Islamabad (Giustozzi 2013: 3; Boucek 2010: 49), Riyadh's key regional partner (Daud 2014: 9). Saudi Arabia favors a conservative Sunni government in Kabul (Boucek 2010: 46) and was among the three countries to recognize the Taliban's Islamic Emirate as the legitimate government of Afghanistan in 1996 (Giustozzi 2013: 9).

*12.2 The United Arab Emirates (UAE)*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan |
| Subordinated | Federal Supreme Council, Federal National Council, Directorate of State Security |
| Memberships | Istanbul Process, OIC |
| Strong ties with | USA, France |
| Notable ties with | Pakistan, India, NATO |
| Armed Opponents | *Jamiat Al-Islah wa Tawjih* |
| Rivals | Iran |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | Combat domestic and regional terrorism; cooperate with the US on measures against terrorism and its proliferation (Katzman 2014b: 15); provide economic aid for the reconstruction of Afghanistan such as educational grants, medical clinics, a large hospital, and housing for Afghan families (Katzman 2014b: 20); strengthen economic development; establish itself as a "regional hub for businesses and institutions" (Ulrichsen 2012) |

The UAE has had troops in southern Afghanistan since 2003, which it intends to keep in place beyond the security transition (Katzman 2014b: 20). A Sunni state by majority and bordered by Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, and Pakistan, the UAE perceives its domestic security as strongly tied to its economic stability. The UAE tries to pursue its security and economic-related goals while balancing them with domestic inequality and calls for political reforms (Ulrichsen 2012).

Since 9/11, the UAE has increased its cooperation with the US to combat Islamist terrorism after it was revealed that two of the hijackers were UAE nationals (Katzman 2014b:15). The UAE hosts the Al Dhafra Air Base (Zenko/Welch 2012) which is used "to perform intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and aerial refueling" for Operation Enduring Freedom (U.S. Air Force Fact Sheets 2012). France's first permanent military base in the Persian Gulf, IMFEAU, is also located in the UAE.

Abu Dhabi's recent decision to double its expenditures on domestic security (Mustafa 2014) and the arrests of al-Qaeda terrorist suspects (BBC News Middle East 2013) point to its security concerns. Another recent development is the ongoing relocation of Afghan investments and human capital to Dubai which observers interpret as a sign of general distrust in a stable Afghanistan (Daud 2014: 3-4).

### *12.3 The State of Qatar*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, General Hamad Bin Ali Al Attiyah, Khalid Bin Mohammad Al Attiyah, Mohammed Saleh Al Sada |
| Subordinated | Consultative Assembly, QIA |
| Memberships | OIC |
| Strong ties with | USA |
| Notable ties with | Iran |
| Rivals | UAE, Iran |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | Maintain state's wealth in its unstable neighborhood and project itself as a neutral mediator in the Afghan peace talks, although the Taliban's political office in Doha proved to be a failure (Roberts 2013); compete with Saudi Arabia in exercising its influence in the region (Katuli 2013); remain crucial US ally in its negotiations with GIRoA and IEA, as Washington guarantees Doha's security (Roberts 2013); revive diplomatic relations with other regional actors after previous interventionist policies (Ulrichsen 2014) |

The country with the world's highest GDP per capita (CIA World Factbook 2013a), Qatar is a predominantly Sunni Muslim state. Doha tries to strengthen its position in mediating regional conflicts (Kamrava 2011) and has hosted the first official office of the Taliban's Islamic Emirate (⇨ 5.1), though the related talks between the Taliban, the Afghan government, and the US have stalled. Doha also hosts the Al Udeid Air Base that includes the 609th Air and Space Operations Center, including a US drone operations command and control center, through which US troops and resources move from Qatar to Afghanistan (Zenko/Welch 2012). Qatar's involvement in Gaza, Lebanon, Sudan, and Yemen are examples of its wider engagement in the region (Blanchard 2014). However, Qatar might exert a less assertive foreign policy in the future because of its new Emir, Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, who is reportedly shifting away from his father's interventionist policies and focusing more on domestic issues (Ulrichsen 2014).

## 13. The Central Asian States

Following 9/11, Central Asia became a focus of attention of American foreign policy. Today, the US relies on the newly established Northern Distribution Network (NDN), "a commercially-based logistical corridor connecting Baltic and Black Sea ports with Afghanistan via Russia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia" (CSIS Experts in the Field 2010) in order to manage the withdrawal of non-lethal supplies from Afghanistan through Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (Nichol 2013: 25). The NDN also serves the wider goal of a "Modern Silk Road" that creates greater connectivity across Eurasia (Stein 2012: 75).

In the context of the currently changing geopolitical landscape, several Central Asian states have managed to negotiate favorable deals with the US (⇨ 7), Russia (⇨ 11.6), or China (⇨ 11.5). For example, some states maintain logistical, transit, and refueling hubs for NATO (⇨ 8) while maneuvering to sustain their political status quo.[6] Three Central Asian states remain the most vulnerable to destabilization as NATO proceeds to withdraw from the region: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Co-ethnic relations create stronger ties between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, but not with Kazakhstan.

Most Central Asian states have preferred bilateral agreements amongst each other or with regional powers over institutionalized regional cooperation. All are at different stages of economic development, with resource-rich Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan on one side, and poorer Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on the other. It seems unlikely that the Central Asian republics could

6 For more on Central Asia's role in the conflict, see Cooley 2012.

effectively tackle potential spillover effects from a collapsing Afghanistan on their own, yet regional governments have largely disengaged from the conflict, which they believe was exacerbated by Western interference (Quinn-Judge 2010).

Thus, while the situation in Afghanistan will certainly affect the dynamics in Central Asia, the lack of regional cooperation and a variety of regional and country-specific issues remain major sources of instability (Cooley 2012; Quinn-Judge 2010: 62-63). These issues include migration and displaced persons, a deteriorating physical infrastructure, the lack of transparent and accountable institutions, ethnic tensions, rising Islamic radicalism, and environmental problems.

### *13.1 The Republic of Tajikistan*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Emomalii Rahmon, Mahmadsaid Ubaydulloyev, Khamrokhon Zarifi, Sherali Khayrulloyev, Muhiddin Kabiri |
| Notable factions | People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast |
| Memberships | CIS, CSTO, EAU (candidate), OIC, SCO, Istanbul Process |
| Strong ties with | Russia |
| Notable ties with | USA, Iran, Afghanistan, China, India, USAID |
| Armed Opponents | IMU, IEA, al-Qaeda |
| Rivals | Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, HuT (domestic) |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | Control Islamism and terrorism; prevent spillover effects from Afghanistan to avoid refugees and local ethnic clashes; protect national borders; tackle cross-border drug-trafficking; prevent the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan (ISW 2013); secure financial gains from NDN; increase trade exchange; enhance energy and transportation infrastructure, including the construction of a railway from Iran to Tajikistan through Afghanistan |

Tajikistan is the poorest of all Central Asian states and the world's most remittance-dependent country (The Economist 2013). Migrant Tajik laborers, mainly in Kazakhstan (⇨ 13.4) and Russia (⇨ 11.6), count for half of the country's GDP.

Tajikistan shares a 1,200-km-long border with Afghanistan. Widely considered a failing state, its fading infrastructure alongside and incompetent management make border patrol and the control of drug-trafficking very difficult, despite assistance from the Russian 201st Motor Rifle Division. A weak economy, 40 percent of unemployment, and the impact of the recent world economic crisis make the fragile state especially vulnerable to a potential spillover of insurgent and terrorist activities from Afghanistan. Observers argue that militant Islamists (⇨ 10) will find a desperate population, ready for alternative models of political order, such as a form of Islamic state as proposed by radical groups (Quinn-Judge 2010: 56-59).

Unsurprisingly, Dushanbe's main interest is to prevent the return of the Taliban to Kabul, which could potentially lead to a civil war involving the Tajik population of Afghanistan (Laruelle/Peyrose/ Axyonova 2013: 9). Tajiks are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, making up 27 percent of the population (CIA World Factbook 2013). The future of the two countries is thus heavily intertwined.

*13.2 The Republic of Uzbekistan*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figure | Islam Karimov, Shavkat Mirziyoev, Rustam Inoyatov, Elyor Ganiyev |
| Subordinated | National Security Service |
| Memberships | CIS, OIC, SCO, Istanbul Process |
| Strong ties with | Germany, |
| Notable ties with | Russia, India, Japan, Iran, National Islamic Movement, ADB |
| Armed Opponents | IMU, IEA, al-Qaeda, IJU |
| Rivals | Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, HuT (domestic), Akromiya (domestic) |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | Maintain stability of the regime through a strong military (Stein 2012: 80); continue electricity exports to Kabul and railway investments in Afghanistan; maintain logistical contracts within NDN; prevent IMU from developing closer ties with the Afghan Taliban; combat drug trafficking; provide financial and military support to anti-Taliban forces in case of IEA's return to Kabul (Chayes 2012) |

Uzbekistan shares a short border with Afghanistan and longer borders with all other Central Asian states. Much of the drugs smuggled out of Afghanistan to China, Europe, and Russia cross through Uzbekistan's border (Stein 2012: 76).

Aspiring to become a main transportation hub, Uzbekistan faces intense competition between Chinese and Indian firms and is already a key actor in Central Asia when it comes to electricity supply to and transportation connections with Afghanistan (Laruelle/Peyrose/Axyonova 2013: 6-7). In 2011, five out of six NDN shipments went through Southern Uzbekistan (Cooley 2012: 45). Relations between Uzbekistan and the US are strained since the US condemned the massacre in Andijan in 2005.

Uzbekistan possesses the largest and strongest military force in Central Asia. Six-plus-Three, a widely forgotten peace proposal for Afghanistan outlined by Tashkent in 2008, indicates Uzbekistan's interest in pursuing security policies outside of the framework of US or Russian proposals. Recent activity between Tashkent and Moscow (⇨ 11.6) suggests an increasing bilateral commitment to fight terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking upon the withdrawal of NATO troops (Upadhyay 2013). As ISAF (⇨ 8) withdraws from Afghanistan, Tashkent seeks to strike a deal with NATO that would include the alliance's ongoing use of the NDN in return for leaving behind some of the non-lethal military equipment for the Uzbek security forces (Kramer 2013, BBC News South Asia 2014).

Domestically, Tashkent fights to dismantle a variety of militant Islamist groups, including the IMU (⇨ 10.3). A 2010 update of the IMU website listed "martyrs" from Northern Afghanistan and Uzbekistan (Stein 2012: 79). The history of the IMU and its current connection with the Taliban suggest that it will continue to play a role in Afghanistan (Stein 2012: 80). Therefore, Tashkent's major interest in the Afghanistan conflict is a political, not an economic one: to prevent the IMU from benefitting from the fighting in Afghanistan and from de-stabilizing Uzbekistan.

*13.3 Turkmenistan*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figure | Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow |
| Memberships | Istanbul Process, OIC, SCO (guest), CIS (unofficial associate) |
| Notable ties with | Turkey, Ismail Khan, India, Pakistan |
| Relevance of conflict | Low |
| Key interests | Maintain "neutral" foreign policy; gain geopolitical independence from Russia; continue cooperation with the government in Kabul regardless of its composition; continue to supply Afghanistan with electricity; provide medical and educational aid to the Turkmens in Afghanistan (Laruelle/Peyrose/Axyonova 2013: 7); maintain role in regional politics as part of the Istanbul Process (Kazemi 2013) |

Ashgabat officially pursues a policy of strict neutrality in foreign affairs. In a 1995 resolution, the UNGA has recognized this position and has stated it supports the "the status of permanent neutrality declared by Turkmenistan" (UNGA 1995).

Turkmenistan ranks 177th out of 179 countries for freedom of the press (Reporters Without Borders 2013: 2). It is bordered by Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Observers believe that its economic motivation is the main driver of its involvement in the Afghanistan conflict, while Ashgabat tries to shield itself from the political turmoil in Kabul. Ashgabat is likely to continue its trade and energy cooperation with Afghanistan, regardless of power shifts in Kabul (Giustozzi 2013: 6), and strives to achieve political and economic independence from Russia (⇨ 11.6). Turkmenistan is "home to some of the largest undeveloped oil and natural gas fields in the world" (ISW 2014). The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Pipeline, a Trans-Caspian gas pipeline to connect Turkmenistan's gas to Europe (Petersen 2012), is scheduled to be finished by 2017. It is considered an important component part of Turkmenistan's policy of geopolitical independence (Sadykov 2013). In the last few years, Turkish contracting companies have made significant investments in Turkmenistan. The Turkish government (⇨ 11.4) claims a special relationship with Turkmenistan that is "bound by a common history, language, religion and culture" (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2014).

### *13.4 The Republic of Kazakhstan*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Nursultan Nazarbayev, Serik Akhmetov, Nurtay Abykayev, Samat Abish |
| Relevant divisions | National Security Committee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| Memberships | CSTO, CIS, EAU, SCO, Istanbul Process, OIC |
| Strong ties with | Russia |
| Notable ties with | India, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, USA, China, Kyrgyzstan |
| Armed Opponents | IMU, IEA |
| Rivals | HuT (domestic) |
| Relevance of conflict | Low |
| Key interests | Present itself as a stable and prosperous regional leader; maintain its credit rating and increase international investments in the country; assist the reconstruction of Afghanistan; continue its adoption of the CBMs for disaster management as part of the Istanbul Process (Kazemi 2013; Daud 2014: 2); maintain bilateral trade with and continue heavy wheat exports to Afghanistan (Laruelle/Peyrose/ Axyonova 2013: 7) |

A relatively prosperous country by regional standards, Kazakhstan enjoyed a rapid increase in its GDP over the last two decades, mostly owing to its significant oil exports. Of all the Central Asian states, it shares the largest border with Russia (⇨ 11.6). It also neighbors Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in the south. Kazakhstan's major interests include establishing itself as a regional leader and maintaining the profits associated with its involvement in air and land transit operations of NATO and US troops. At the same time, Astana declares on a regular basis that Afghanistan's uncertain future presents a threat to regional stability.

Kazakhstan's concerted efforts to increase its international reputation as a trustworthy partner influenced Astana's 2014 decision to provide increased humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Kazakhstan's Assistance Program for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan focuses on water supply, infrastructure development, and construction commodities, while the Agreement on Cooperation in Education focuses on educating 1,000 Afghan students at Kazakhstan's universities from 2010 to 2014 (Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the USA 2013). At the same time, Kazakhstan faces major internal issues. Its first and current president has headed the state for the last twenty-three years, and there is a lack of transparent mechanisms for the future transition of power. There is also rising discontent over the state's currency devaluation policy and frustration because of perceived repression of religion and expression (Lillis 2014; Lillis 2014a; Sindelar/Toiken 2012).

### *13.5 The Kyrgyz Republic*

| | |
|---|---|
| Figures | Almazbek Atambayev, Zhantoro Satybaldiyev, Omurbek Tekebayev, Erkin Bekbolotov |
| Memberships | CSTO, CIS, OIC, SCO, Istanbul Process, EAU (candidate) |
| Strong ties with | Russia, USA |
| Notable ties with | China, Turkey, Kazakhstan |
| Armed Opponents | IMU |
| Rivals | Uzbekistan, *Tablighi Jamaat* (domestic), HuT (domestic) |
| Relevance of conflict | Medium |
| Key interests | Tackle security issues associated with the drug trade coming from Afghanistan; maintain stability in ethnically diverse southern Kyrgyzstan; receive assistance and expertise necessary to control its borders (Kim/Indeo 2013: 282); benefit from internationally planned and regionally implemented projects for the economic recovery of Afghanistan, such as the Kambaratinsk Dam |

Bordered by China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan is highly dependent on foreign assistance and expertise to control migration through its borders. Observers believe that Kyrgyzstan is incapable of maintaining control in case of a revival of ethnic conflicts in Osh, Southern Kyrgyzstan (Norwegian Helsinki Committee 2012), or in case of a spillover of insurgent activities from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan after 2014 (Kim/Indeo 2013: 282). *Tablighi Jamaat*, a movement that is ideologically close to the IEA (⇨ 5.1), has a significant number of followers in Kyrgyzstan. Of notable concern are consequences of the drug smuggling from Afghanistan, including human trafficking, rising HIV rates, drug addiction, increased criminal activity, and alternative power structures that have appeared in the South (Olcott 2010: 51).

Even though Bishkek is ready to compromise to a certain degree with external actors when it comes to its sovereignty (Olcott 2010: 57), it seeks to maintain a delicate balance in cooperating between US, China, and Russia in order to increase its economic security and manage its large budget deficit (Kim/Indeo 2013: 282). In this context, Bishkek seeks to benefit from regional infrastructure projects, most notably from the Kambarata-based hydroelectric project, which will be used to integrate the electricity market for Central and South Asia (Olcott 2010: 55).

## 14. Conclusion: The Afghanistan Network as of Early 2014

A negotiated settlement could end more than 30 years of civil war in Afghanistan and help stabilize a region plagued with turmoil and violent extremism. However, the strategic complexity of the conflict is a main obstacle to negotiations. This paper maps out the negotiation environment by exploring the actors, interests, and alliances in the Afghanistan conflict.

An assessment of the different interests and perceptions of the various parties, as well as of the different issues at stake, reveals distinguishable yet overlapping sub-conflicts:

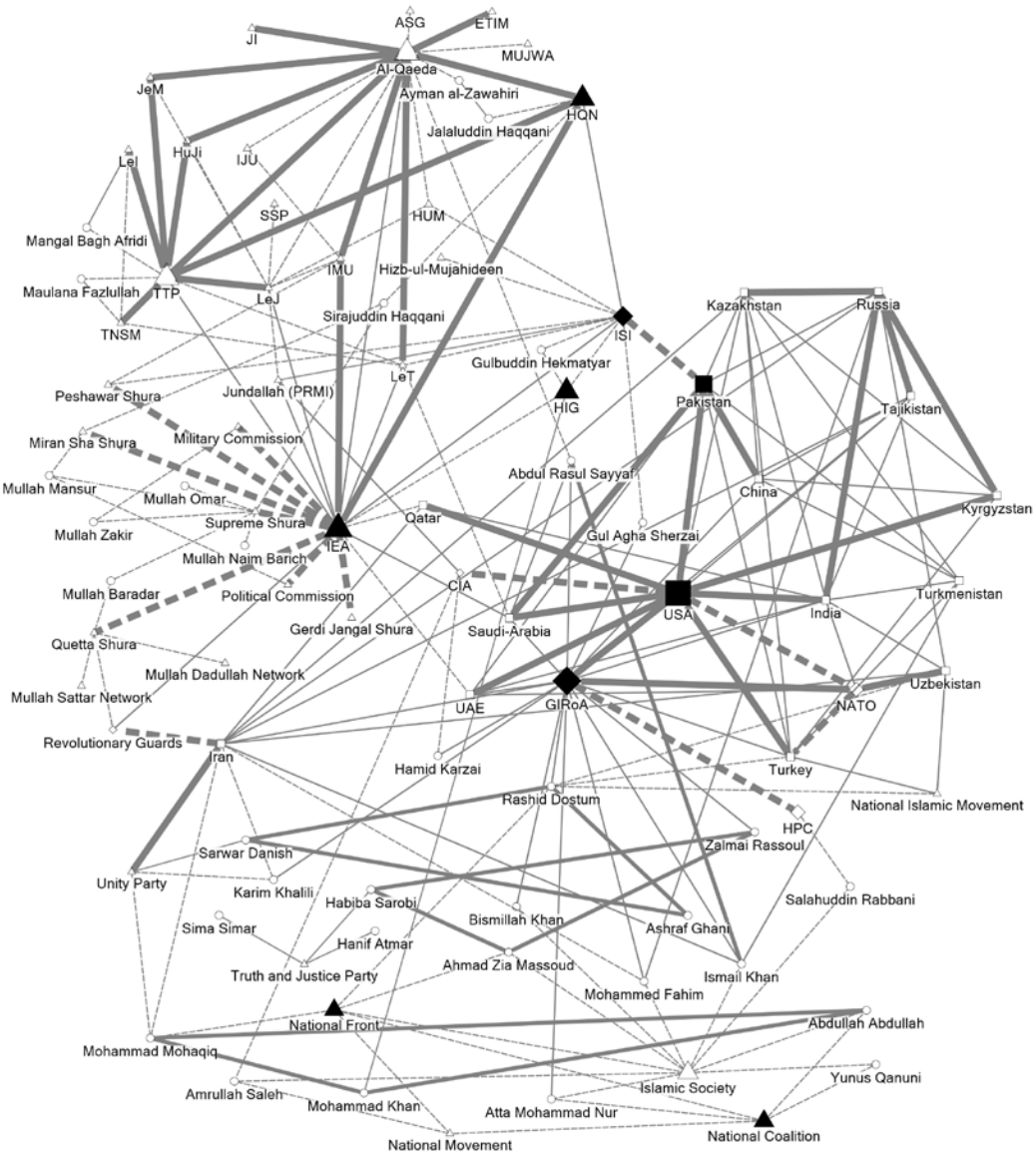
1. The armed conflict between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and other insurgent groups on one side and the Afghan government on the other side can be considered a **conflict of legitimacy**. The Taliban see themselves as the honorable defenders of Afghanistan and Islam in a just war against Western invaders and a corrupt pro-American "puppet regime."
2. Within the Afghan society, conservatives and reformists experience a **conflict of modernization** about the role of tradition and religion in society. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and other insurgents exploit this conflict by demonizing proponents of democratization and liberalization as Western agents.
3. The withdrawal of US and NATO troops in combination with the unsettled armed conflict may lead to an escalation of the existing **ethnic tensions** in multi-ethnic Afghanistan. The uncertain future provides incentives to the Afghan warlords to increasingly mobilize and arm their followers along ethnic lines.

4. While power-holders and traditional elites have benefitted from the influx of money during a decade of nation-building, large segments of the Afghan population are suffering from poverty and violence. The resulting gap between wealthy and poor Afghans fuels a **socio-economic conflict** which, combined with endemic corruption, causes distrust in the political system.
5. Foreign governments support their various Afghan proxies in order to maintain influence and protect themselves against a loss of power in their **conflict of regional hegemony**. Fragmented and unstable Afghanistan is exploited by neighboring countries and other states, which has negative consequences on intra-Afghan reconciliation and societal peace.
6. In its efforts to **counter violent extremism**, the US seeks to destroy al-Qaeda operatives and other militant Islamists in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan's Tribal Areas, the US increasingly relies on drone strikes. These areas are the strongholds of the Pakistani Taliban who continue their armed struggle against the Pakistani state.
7. Pakistan's tribal areas along the Afghan border are a hotbed for **transnational militant Islamism** which threatens region stability. Most states are struggling with militant Islamist movements that aim to end any perceived Western influence in Muslim lands. These groups receive generous support from donors in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.
8. Unaddressed grievances in Balochistan (Pakistan and Iran), Kashmir (Pakistan, India, China), and Xinjiang (China) fuel **separatist sentiments** that are further exploited by militant Islamists. Regional governments blame each other for stirring up instability and violence on each other's territory.
9. This behavior is related to several **traditional rivalries** between states that compete for regional or religious leadership. Examples include Saudi Arabia and Iran, Pakistan and India, and India and China.
10. The USA, Russia, and China compete for **political and economic influence** in Central Asia. Some of the Central Asian republics benefit from this competition, while others are plagued with political instability and severe economic problems.

Since these problems are heavily intertwined and involve a variety of actors, no party alone can decide the fate of the Afghanistan conflict. This uncertainty serves as an incentive to all parties to engage in various "**hedging strategies**" in order to prevent marginalization. The lack of a legitimate forum or institutional framework that the parties can rely on in order to balance their interests reinforces patterns of mistrust and misperception.

A notable feature of the conflict is a shortage of static, reliable, and durable coalitions built on trust among the main parties. Instead, relevant actors constantly **renegotiate, adjust, or shift their alliances**, or rely on different actors to advance different goals. Overall, the relationships of the parties to the conflict are best described as a multifaceted network of sometimes contradictory alliances:

***Network Diagram: Actors and Alliances in the Afghanistan Conflict***




***Symbols***

*Squares:* States

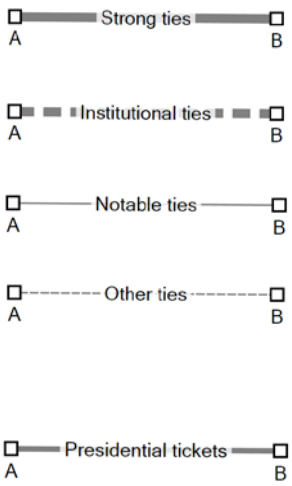
*Diamonds:* Actors controlled by states

*Triangles:* Non-state actors

*Circles:* Figures

*Symbols filled in black:* Main actors to the Afghanistan conflict. These would most likely be included in any future peace agreement.

***Lines***




*Network as of early 2014*

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Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **ADB** | Asian Development Bank |
| **ANCB** | Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau |
| **ANSF** | Afghan National Security Forces |
| **AQAP** | Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula |
| **AQIM** | Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb |
| **ASG** | Abu Sayyaf Group |
| **AWN** | Afghan Women's Network |
| **BBC** | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| **BLA** | Balochistan Liberation Army |
| **BLF** | Baluch Liberation Front |
| **BSA** | Bilateral Security Agreement |
| **CBM** | Confidence building measures |
| **CDC** | Community Development Council |
| **CIA** | Central Intelligence Agency |
| **CIS** | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| **CSHRN** | Civil Society & Human Rights Network |
| **CSIS** | Center for Strategic & International Studies |
| **CSTO** | Collective Security Treaty Organization |
| **EAU** | Eurasian (Economic) Union |
| **EIJ** | Egyptian Islamic Jihad |
| **ETIM** | East Turkestan Islamic Movement |
| **EU** | European Union |
| **FAS** | Federation of American Scientists |
| **FATA** | Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan) |
| **FCCS** | Foundation for Culture and Civil Society |
| **FSB** | Federal Security Service (Russia) |
| **GDP** | Gross domestic product |
| **GIRoA** | Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan |
| **HIG** | Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin |
| **HIV** | human immunodeficiency virus |
| **HPC** | High Peace Council |
| **HPG** | Humanitarian Policy Group |
| **HQN** | Haqqani Network |
| **HSM** | Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen |
| **HUM** | Harkat-ul-Mujahideen-al-Islami |
| **HuJi** | Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami |
| **HuT** | Hizb-ut-Tahir |
| **IEA** | Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan |
| **IJU** | Islamic Jihad Union |
| **IMFEAU** | Implantation militaire française aux Émirats arabes unis |
| **IMU** | Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan |
| **ISAF** | International Security Assistance Force |
| **ISI** | Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **ISW** | Institute for the Study of War |
| **JI** | Jemaah Islamiyah |
| **LeI** | Lashkar-e-Islam |
| **LeJ** | Lashkar-e-Jhangvi |
| **LeT** | Lashkar-e-Taiba |
| **MİT** | Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı (Turkey) |
| **MUJWA** | Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa |
| **NATO** | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| **NDN** | Northern Distribution Network |
| **NDS** | National Directorate of Security (Afghanistan) |
| **NGO** | Non-governmental organization |
| **NPR** | National Public Radio |
| **NYU** | New York University |
| **OEF** | Operation Enduring Freedom |
| **OIC** | Organization of Islamic Cooperation |
| **PRMI** | People's Resistance Movement of Iran |
| **PRT** | Provincial Reconstruction Team |
| **QIA** | Qatar Investment Authority |
| **SCO** | Shanghai Cooperation Organisation |
| **SCOP** | Supreme Court of Pakistan |
| **SSP** | Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan |
| **TAPI** | Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline |
| **TIKA** | Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency |
| **TNSM** | Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi |
| **TTP** | Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan |
| **UAE** | United Arab Emirates |
| **UK** | United Kingdom |
| **UN** | United Nations |
| **UNAMA** | United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan |
| **UNGA** | United Nations General Assembly |
| **UNSC** | United Nations Security Council |
| **UNHRC** | United Nations Human Rights Council |
| **US; USA** | United States of America |
| **USAID** | United States Agency for International Development |
| **WAMY** | World Assembly of Muslim Youth |
| **WHO** | World Health Organization |
| **WML** | World Muslim League |

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